

ISIS and IRAQ: *The Future of Kurdistan*  
**A Conversation with Stuart Gibson**

**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2014, 3 PM**  
**Weston Public Library, Norfield Road, Weston, CT**

**Stuart Gibson**, an international consultant with over twenty years' experience working with cultural organizations and governments undergoing economic and political transition and post-conflict development will present an illustrated talk and lead a public conversation on Kurdistan and its evolving role in the Middle East.

Recent events in Iraq have brought into question many geopolitical assumptions not only about Iraq but the Middle East and beyond. One crucial element in these unfolding events is the autonomous region of Kurdistan in northern Iraq - its role in combating ISIS, its relationship with the new Baghdad government and Iraq's neighbors Iran, Syria, and Turkey, its 'special' relationship with the US, its expanding economic role in the region, and its longstanding aspirations for independence.

Gibson notes that "Kurdistan has been an unflinching ally of the United States for over twenty years. It is a pluralistic society embracing Kurds, Armenians, Turkmen, Yazidis, and Christians among others. Its capital Irbil is one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world dating to 6,000BCE. Having suffered horribly under the Saddam regime, it nevertheless remained steadfast in its resistance to that repressive regime. Since the end of the first Gulf war it is been unwavering in reclaiming its heritage and cultural identity and erecting a viable political and economic social order as an independent region in Iraq. Since the emergence of ISIS, it has been transformed into a haven for those persecuted and disowned throughout the region and has also emerged as a key player in confronting the ISIS threat."

Gibson has worked extensively in the countries of the former Soviet Union, Eastern and Central Europe, Central Asia, and the Middle East. He is a UN senior international expert on museum management and organization, cultural policy, and the financing of culture. He is Secretary to the International Advisory Board of the State Hermitage Museum (St. Petersburg, Russia), a UNESCO advisor to the Uzbekistan Ministry of Culture and Sport on the development of museums and tourism, and advisor to the Kurdish Regional Government (Iraq) on museums and archaeology. Gibson is a frequent speaker and lecturer.

Seating at the lecture is limited. Reservations cannot be made in advance.